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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

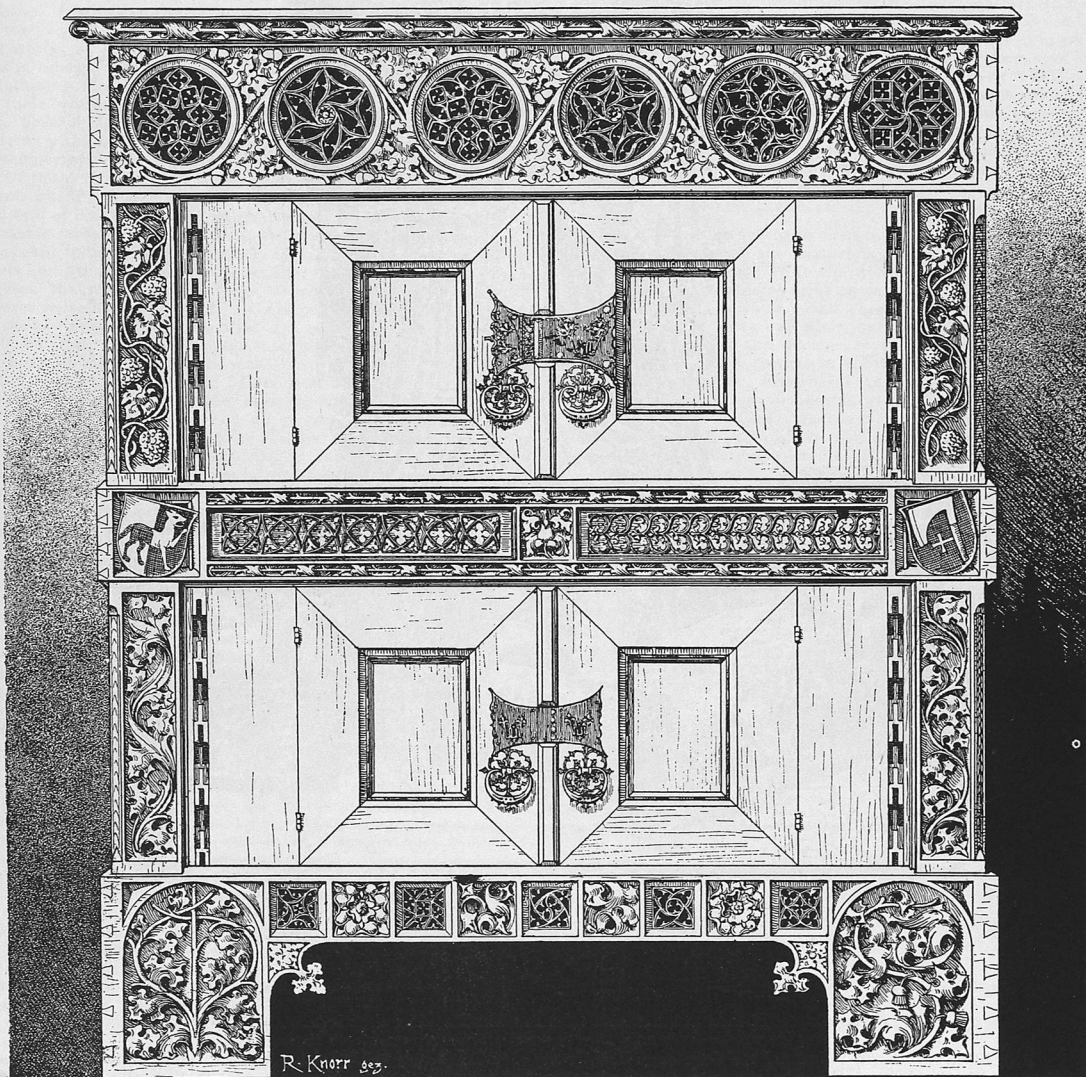
## DYE PAINTED TAPESTRIES.



FROM time to time we have spoken of tapestries painted with ordinary oil pigments, but it must not be forgotten that in Europe for some time past an attempt has been made to revive the lost industry of painting fabrics with dyes. This is a revival which has been welcomed as a new source of aesthetic enjoyment, and the process enables the decorator to obtain beautiful hangings

harmonious in color and bold in drawing that look equally

beautiful by day or artificial light. The dyes, having no body, penetrate into the material, preserving to the canvas its grain and pliancy and giving to the painting that internal brightness which artists of all times have striven for. Dye painting has a charm of color all its own; it possesses a modulation of tone which makes it better even than the woven tapestry, as the picture exhibits the weaving, which of necessity is a mechanical process. The weaver dyes the threads to match the picture underneath his warp; the painter, on the other hand, dyes his picture into the tapestry after it is woven, and thus is able to melt one color into another and produce a mystery of tone. It is the transparency of the dyes which makes the luminous color of the old tapestries and the beauty and richness of the modern dyed goods, and which makes them permanent. There are three magnificent tapestries in the South Kensington Museum which are exceedingly beautiful in color



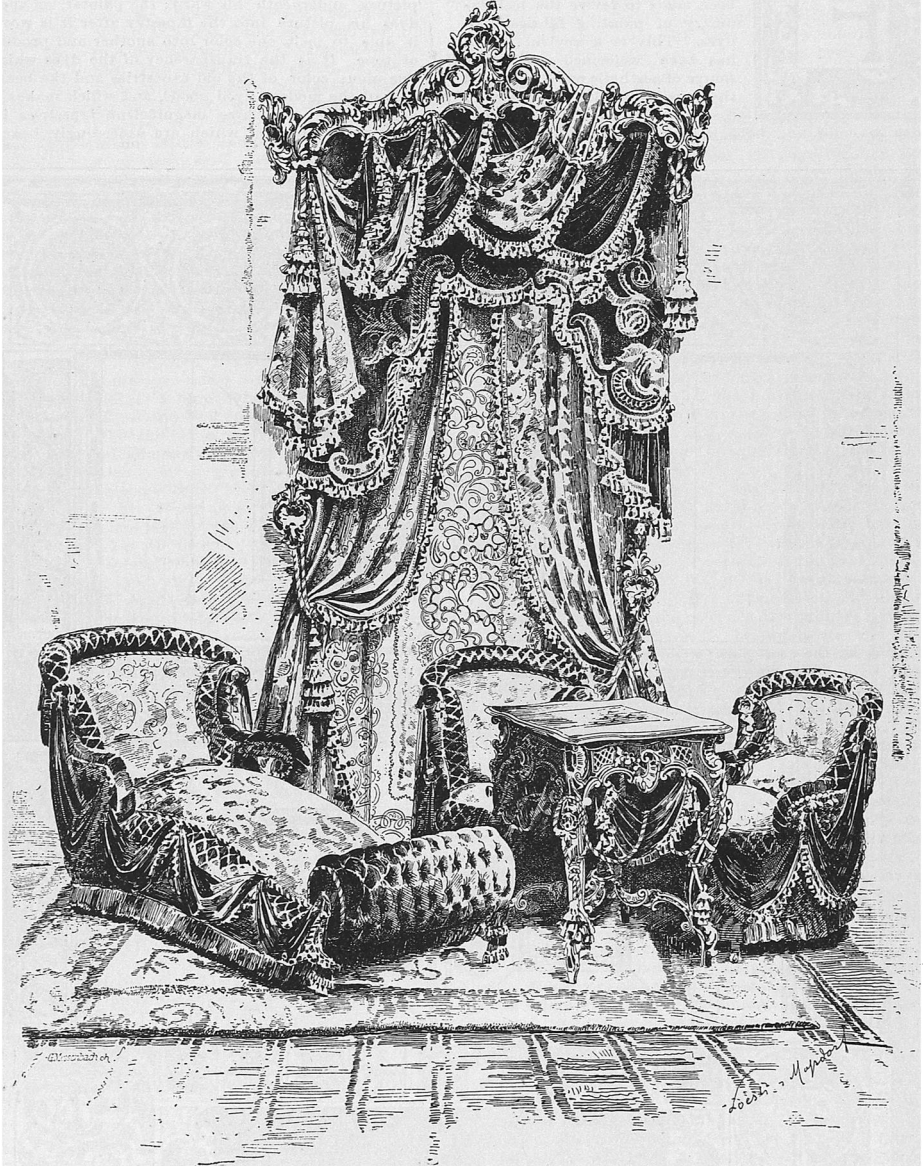
LATE GOTHIC CABINET, BY JORG SYRLIN. DRAWN BY ROBERT KNORR, STUTTGART.

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after two hundred years' exposure. Among the subjects there are crowds of figures and landscape effects which are obtained by ringing the changes on the wood colors with the addition of silk woven in for gold. There seems to have been very little chemical modification of the wood colors, indigo, fustic, madder, logwood and weld, and these tapestries surprise every one by the variety of effects of color produced.

at the general desire there appears to be to form a palette from his dyes, which by their use in painted hangings add greatly to the beauty of American homes.

Wool, which is the most useful fabric used in painted tapestries, is an albumenoid body, and by its animal nature has the property of beautifying color, whereas cotton or flax, which are vegetable in their nature, are hard and impervious to color.



WINDOW DECORATION AND FURNITURE DESIGNED AND MADE BY E. RUSSMANN, ASCHAFFENBURG.

Red, blue, yellow and brown are the necessary colors, from which, with the help of the salts of various metals, the dyer makes all his shades and tones, however numerous; and when we consider the variety of effects, the delicate detail and the perfect finish of the modern dyers' work we are not surprised

Silk, which takes aniline color without a mordant, has to be prepared for the reception of the vegetable colors. Each of these materials has to undergo a different treatment and the substances used for this purpose are called mordants. The dye painter has to consider the action of these mordants, which

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are astringent, acid, or alkali, as well as the different nature of his colors, as the mordant, if used to excess, will destroy the cloth. Wool which is completely dissolved in hot solutions of caustic alkalis is not much affected by diluted acids, but concentrated acids as well as chlorine very much affect its fibre, while silk is not affected by caustic alkalis or diluted solutions of bleaching powder. If it is necessary to dye cotton in an acid bath it must be freely washed, for if a mineral acid, however diluted, be allowed to dry in the fibre, it will be gradually destroyed.

Until the discovery of the coal colors in the middle of this century, the dyeing industry was dependent upon the animal kingdom for colors, applied mostly by simple chemical processes. These colors were indigo, which used to be obtained from woad, and is now produced from the leaves of the indigo ferra, a plant cultivated in South America. Madder is obtained from *rubia tinctorum*, a plant which grows wild in the south of Europe. There are several insect reds, the scarlet of the ancients grows on the prickly oak of the Mediterranean, and the cochineal is a small Mexican insect containing strong coloring matter. The ancients used weld for their bright yellows. Quercitron bark is from the yellow oak, growing in North America. All these coloring matters treated with various acids, alkalis and metallic bases produce an infinity of shades of color.

Of the mordants, alum has been used from time immemorial. Argol, which is otherwise known as cream of tartar, acetic acid, aciditate of lims, tannic acid, sulphuric acid, and so on, are the mordants which give fixation to the dyes, and are used with great skill to neutralize each other. Glycerine is used to dissolve colors and prevent them from spreading in the fibre. It will be seen that chemical knowledge as well as knowledge of his art is a necessity on the part of a dye painter to be successful.

It has been objected to that dye painting, as compared with painting by means of pigments, is that the dyes, having no body and but little substance, have a tendency to fade, but in reply to this, it should be observed that the fibre of the material is itself made another color by altering its nature in the case of vegetable fibres, and by producing a combination of the fibre and the color in the animal cloths, and hence if the dye painting is done successfully, the colors will remain faster than if done by pigments. If the painter acts on the principle of knowing the nature of the colors he uses, and for precaution selects those organic tints which have been used by the old masters in dyeing, and will use them in the same way that they did, fixing the colors by the same mordants, the colors will last as long as the old work has, and will not fade. There is this objection to the dyeing process—that we cannot dye the already woven cloth so well as the tapestry weaver dyes his unwoven threads, for he can soak and even boil the threads if necessary. The question is entirely one of mordant. If the cloth is sufficiently mordanted, and is painted whilst wet, with repeated washings of the color, putting on plenty of color and letting the fabric drink it; or otherwise, mixing the colors with some oxydizing substance and effecting a union of the coloring matter with the fibre, by steaming, if in either case the work be thoroughly done, the painting will go all through the cloth so that it will be difficult to tell on which side it has been painted. The tendency of acids and mordants to burn the fibres, can be prevented by repeated washings, the acids and mordants being no longer needed after they have done their work. They are used to fix, shade, or raise color, and as soon as this is done the sooner they are washed away the better. The acid should never be allowed to dry upon the fibre.

In dye painting the object is alter the character of the fibre, and not give it a coat of color. In choosing the cloth the degree of roughness should agree with the size of the subject—the larger the subject the rougher the cloth. The painting is done with stiff hog-hair brushed. Breadth and simplicity would solve many of the difficulties in the process, and these difficulties are characteristic of all tapestries and all periods. In the early tapestry paintings, while we are charmed with their beauty, we are at the same time astonished at the simple means by which their beautiful effects are obtained, and if the modern painter works upon the same lines he will find that large subjects are not so difficult to manage, and that the whole affair is not so complicated as it appears to be.

Tapestry painting as an art has an especial charm of its own, and opens a prospect for the employment of talents of every description, and at the same time presents an opportunity for the execution of the most varied and extensive range of subjects. These may be either heroic, or historic, or instead, pictures of every day life, landscapes, birds, fruits and flowers, and so on. The artist should rest satisfied with the inherent brightness of his dyes, and not attempt the subtleties of oil painting. His work should be bold both in design and execution. An intense love of nature will produce splendid work: It is well to avoid architecture as much as possible, because straight lines are the most difficult things to get in tapestry. Architecture upon cloth, as it hangs, shows a want of sincerity and truth.

Amongst the leading decorators who are introducing tapestry paintings as modern decorations is Mr. Geo. Halbert, the well-known Brooklyn decorator. Mr. Halbert has just returned from an extended visit to Paris, and has brought with him a large number of dye-painted tapestries, executed by some of the finest artists in the city. The subjects are chiefly XVIII. century scenes, Watteau compositions and panels after Tenier and Boucher that harmonize so well with the prevailing styles of decoration. There is great variety exhibited in the treatment of the various subjects, some being extremely vivid and realistic while others are in soft, delicate, spiritual tones, making the panel more of a background than a picture.

ARRAS is recommended to be used in place of Roman satin; it is more expensive, but the texture is finer and the threads, being closer, do not rough up in the working, and the surface is more satiny. Appliques of arras on wool serge is very effective for portières and curtains. Mail sheeting is another favorite material, and it looks well when darned. It is suited for cushions, table centres and blotter covers. A striking table centre is of arras, with decoration consisting of dragons embroidered in gold silks. Chairbacks are worked all over with set designs—say of daisies—connected with scrolly lines, or of shamrock leaves and daisies. One that is particularly pleasing bears a conventional design at one end only, that is carried out with a number of different colored filloesles. They are so harmonized that the design is not in the least showy, though it is slightly "Oriental."

SQUARES of satin, silk and brocade, almost covered with splendid embroidery, are used for throwing over the end of a grand piano. This plan saves all the trouble of drapery, and yet it takes off from the plainness of the long flat top of the instrument. The square, too, has the advantage of being easily removed when the piano top is required open. The work being elaborate, one or two articles set upon it are sufficient. One of these squares is composed of creamy yellow satin. The design is after the Venetian school; the center is circular, but all regularity is broken up by scrolls. The border is elaborate, with spreading foliage and bold curves at the corners and also at the four sides. The combination of colors used makes this a masterpiece. They range from indigo to light blue, from terra cotta to pink, and the deep creamy yellow ground throws them up splendidly. The fringe is made of the same silk as those employed in the embroidery; the tassels are small, and are placed closely together in one row, and depend from a three-plait of the silks, which forms the heading. The lining is a pale, yellowy-pink coral. Quite as charming in its way is one of gold damask, with deep plush border of golden brown tint; the design of detached flower sprays.

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